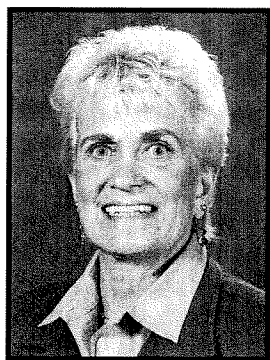


Hammerstrom's

for the people
in the 17th Senate District

Hotline



State Senator
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State Capitol • Lansing, MI 48913
1-888-477-8238
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March 31, 2003



HOMELAND SECURITY WEBSITE LAUNCHED. Michigan residents have a new tool in keeping their families safe from harm. The Executive Office has launched a new website for homeland security, designed to help keep Michigan families informed by giving them the most up-to-date security information so they can protect themselves in the unlikely event of emergency. The website serves as a comprehensive source of information on homeland security issues. The new site incorporates information from federal and state agencies, including Michigan State Police, Department of Community Health, Public Service Commission, Military and Veterans Affairs, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Education. Included in the page is an "Our Troops" link which gives current deployment information, what citizens can do to support families who have loved ones serving overseas, and a photo album containing pictures of some of our servicemen and women. The website is located at www.michigan.gov/homeland.

FIRE SAFETY PACKAGE INTRODUCED. Working with several of my colleagues, I have reintroduced legislation aimed at decreasing the number of fire fatalities in Michigan. The Fire Safety First Package is a series of six bills introduced to eliminate the tragic and preventable loss of life associated with house or business fires. The package includes a bill to create an exemption from use tax on the purchase, storage, or use of fire extinguishers, fire alarm systems, and fire suppression systems; to exempt fire safety equipment from the Michigan sales tax; to create a refundable income tax credit for consumers who purchase fire safety equipment; to require historic districts to be equipped with fire safety equipment; and to amend the Michigan multi-housing law to require all apartments to be equipped with fire alarm systems and fire suppression equipment. The legislation is in response to an alarming 2001 report that approximately 150 people, including several children, perished in household fires. Senate Bills 337-339 are headed to the Senate Committee on Local, Urban and State Affairs, while Senate Bills 340-342 await consideration in the Senate Finance Committee.

IRS OFFERS TOLL-FREE NUMBER TO ASSIST TAXPAYERS. The Internal Revenue Service is providing two toll-free numbers to help taxpayers with their returns. For assistance with business returns, Michigan's corporations, small businesses, and partnerships and trusts can call toll free: 800-829-4933. This number can be used as a resource to address questions, as well as an opportunity to apply for a new Employer Identification Number (EIN). Individual taxpayers looking for their current year refunds may request assistance from: 800-829-1954 (toll free).

UPDATE ON MICHIGAN'S 2-1-1 SYSTEM. The nonemergency 211 number reserved by the FCC has recently been adopted by the Michigan Legislature. Michigan residents now have access to an easy-to-remember, free-to-the-user phone number linking people with the services they need 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Whether a parent wants help for his child with a learning impairment, a battered spouse seeks shelter from their abuser, a senior wants to volunteer, or a family searches for employment, 211 can locate the help they are looking for. Dialing 211 connects the caller to a specialist who can assess the caller's needs and link the caller to the right solution using services from federal, state, and local government and nonprofit agencies. The new 211 nonemergency number is currently available in Kent and Calhoun Counties and should be extended to over 66 percent of the state's population over the next 12 months.

DO YOU KNOW? The Stars and Stripes flew over Michigan soil for the first time on July 11, 1796.